REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Upon entry of the above amendments, newly added Claims 17-31 will be currently pending. Claims 1-16 have been cancelled.

Original Claim 2 has been rewritten in independent form as independent Claim 17.

Original Claims 3-6 have been reintroduced as new Claims 18-21, respectively, and depend from new Claim 17.

Original Claim 8 has been rewritten in independent form as independent Claim 22.

Original claims 9-16 have been reintroduced as new Claims 23-30, respectively, and depend from new Claim 22.

New independent Claim 31 reciting that cyclone separator includes, *inter alia*, "an air-lock operable to discharge wood pieces but not gas from the cyclone housing") is based on support, e.g., at page 7, lines 25-26 and page 8, lines 16-21, together with original Claim 1.

No new matter has been introduced by the amendment.

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the early identification of allowable subject matter. In that original claims 2 and 8 have bee rewritten in independent form (new claims 17 and 22), as suggested at page 5 of the Office Action, it is respectfully submitted that these claims are allowable, and that all claims depending from them are allowable for at least the same reasons as their respective parent claim.

The rejections made in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. §§112, second paragraph, 102(b) and 103 should not be applicable to new claims 17-30.

For instance, the antecedent basis criticisms made against original claims 3, 4 and 14 are not applicable in related newly added claims 18, 19 and 28, respectively, as their respective parent claims provide antecedent basis for the "fingers" and/or "rotary members" recitations.

Original independent claims 1 and 7 have not been reintroduced so the art-based rejections made against them, and several of their original dependent claims, are moot.

Applicants note that the Office Action also applied Omoto et al. against original dependent Claims 5 and 12 which claims further recite an air-lock. Applicants respectfully disagree that Omoto et al. teach or suggest an air-lock feature as originally claimed, nor as presently claimed.

Original claims 5 and 12 have been re-introduced as new Claims 20 and 26, respectively, which now depend from claims re-written in independent form that were indicated to be allowable in the Office Action.

As to new independent Claim 31, Applicant respectfully submits that Omoto et al. does not teach or suggest a cyclone separator in the claimed combination which includes a wood discharge device comprising an air-lock operable to discharge wood pieces but not gas from the cyclone housing.

Omoto et al. indicates that: "*the hopper 2a or 2b is provided at its converging bottom with a discharge port 12a or 12b for the chips B and flakes A.*" (col. 2, lines 19-21).

Moreover, Omoto et al. indicates:

"*In order to assure smooth, controlled discharge of wood pieces from the hopper 2a or 2b, the discharge port 12a or 12b is internally provided with a stirrer unit 13a or 13b and an adjuster unit 14a or 14b in a vertically spaced arrangement as best seen in FIG. 3.*" (col. 2, lines 25-29).

Applicant points out that the hopper and discharge port configuration shown in FIG. 3 of Omoto et al. does not include an air-lock.

The adjuster unit 14a or 14b arranged below 13a or 13b in the "converging bottom", i.e., the necked portion, at the lower end of the hopper shown in FIG. 3 of Omoto et al. has rotatable vanes 18a or 18b.

However, FIG. 3 in Omoto et al. clearly depicts the presence of a significant air gap or clearance between the outer ends of the vanes 18a or 18b and the inner wall of the necked portion of the hopper.

The written specification of Omoto et al. nowhere teaches or suggests an air seal or air-lock is provided in hopper 2a or 2b, nor particularly in the discharge port 12a or 12b thereof, nor that it would be desirable or needed (see, e.g., col. 2, lines 41-49).

Applicant submits that no air-lock is provided in the hopper of Omoto et al.

In view of at least these reasons, Applicant submits that the rejections of original claims 5 and 12 in the Office Action were not tenable, and should not be made again against new independent Claim 31.

In view of the above, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and notice of such is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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